DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 453 225 TM 032 576

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TITLE Central Curricular Decisions and Quality Assurance Initiatives.
PUB DATE 2001-04-11
NOTE 15p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Seattle, WA, April 10-14, 2001).
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative (142) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *College Faculty; *Departments; Educational Innovation; Evaluation Methods; Foreign Countries; Higher Education; *Program Evaluation; *Self Evaluation (Groups)
IDENTIFIERS Belgium

ABSTRACT

The general research goal for this study was to determine whether the decision to launch guided self-study as a global concept for university teaching at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (Flanders, Belgium) has had any impact on the evaluation of educational quality at the level of individual programs. The main hypothesis was that departments that scored high on problem definition (development of mission and evaluation attitude) and on innovative capacity (innovation activities and professional training policy) would show a greater impact of the central decision to implement guided self-study on their evaluation practice. Three humanities departments were selected to take part in the study. Within each department, researchers interviewed the chair of the permanent educational commission, the chair of the evaluation commission, and a member of the evaluation commission. The data indicate that the guided self-study did have some impact on the evaluation initiatives of two of the departments, although it is remarkable that neither department discussed in depth the concept's grounds nor its consequences. One department used the concept in an effort to provoke a discussion about educational quality, and the other incorporated the guided self-study into its own mission. The departments that scored better on problem definition and innovation capacity seem to be better armed to work with the evaluation innovations. (Contains 12 references.) (SLD)

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ED 453 225

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SYMPOSIUM

"Enhancing self-regulated and problem-based learning in Flemish higher education"

Central curricular decisions and quality assurance initiatives

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Paper presented at the annual meeting of the AERA, Seattle, april 10-14 2001

1. Introduction

Recent developments in the research on learning and instruction have an influence on university education. This is also the case for Flemish universities. Most of these have tried to improve their educational quality by embracing a student-centred approach. In February 1999 the academic authorities of the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven in Belgium launched 'guided self-study' as a new global concept for university teaching. In line with the socio-constructivist view on education (Billett, 1996) guided self-study aims at the following objectives. Students should acquire the knowledge and skills that are typical for their discipline. Yet, this can not be an end in itself. Guided self-study aims at the development of a critical scientific attitude, which helps the students to scrutinise the knowledge and skills typical for their field and enables them to interpret new information because they have gained insight in the methodology through which these insights were developed. Guided self-study also wants to enable students to contribute to the development of knowledge. Finally students should be able to accept responsibility in society and in their professional life, as they have learned to formulate well-founded judgements and to take an argued point of view in the social debate. Guided self-study is considered a directive concept for the design, development and organisation of university education. It redefines the roles of both students and faculty. Students are expected to take responsibility for their own learning. This requires an active and actual contribution to the teaching process from their side. Students should also be prepared to spread their learning activities throughout the year instead of peaking their study efforts just before the examination periods. This will make it possible for them to construct knowledge in an active way and in interaction with different elements of the learning environment (faculty, materials, library, fellow-students, ICT-applications ...). Faculty members are responsible for supporting students' learning processes. This means that they have to decide how much and what kind of support the students need to realise the learning goals. In order to take this decision, they have to take into account students' prior knowledge, their motivation and their meta-cognitive skills. The development of students' learning capacities and knowledge will challenge faculty to gradually run down their support. Eventually students become partners in defining the objectives for the course and in delineating the way to realise these.

In order to support the implementation of this new concept, the academic authorities designed an educational policy plan. This plan encompasses eleven points of action, going from the empowerment of the educational commissions responsible for the quality management at the level of the 42 programs offered at the Leuven university, over the further development of the quality assurance initiatives to the strengthening of the communication about education. In general terms one could say that this plan focuses both on structural and cultural measures in order to create a fruitful soil for guided self-study. With regard to the quality assurance initiatives it is stated explicitly that guided self-study has to become a central point of attention in the evaluation of the educational quality of the programs.

Two years after the adoption (at the central level!) of guided self-study as the new concept for university education, we wanted to find out whether it had affected the educational practice at the level of the programs.

2. Research question and theoretical framework

The general research question for this exploratory study is whether the central decision to launch guided self-study as a global concept for university teaching has had any impact on the evaluation of the educational quality at the level of individual programs. It might seem odd to focus on the impact of guided self-study on the quality assurance initiatives. It is indeed more common (in the innovation- as well as in the curriculum development literature) to look at the impact of centrally launched innovations on the actual teaching practice of particular teachers and on the results of the students. Following the usual logic, one would only expect an impact of such large scale, top-down innovations on the quality assurance initiatives in the last phase of the innovation process, the incorporation phase, following the adoption and implementation phase (van den Akker, 1993). The argument to question whether guided self-study is embedded in the organisational context as a consequence of a centrally taken decision, is twofold. First, one can point at the observation that the decision to work with guided self-study as a global concept is a very recent one. Important innovations typically take time. They are realised step by step. Teachers have to get the opportunity to develop at their pace and starting from concrete experiences the skills they need to make the fundamental changes work (Pogrow, 1996). Changing teaching habits demands time (see also Walsh et al., 1991). One can expect that only few changes in the actual teaching practice could be found two years after the central decision was taken. Second, in order to support the implementation of guided self-study the academic authorities adapted the guidelines programs use to evaluate their educational quality. The programs are explicitly encouraged to redefine their educational mission statement according to the principles of guided self-study and to take the concept into account when designing their evaluation project. The evaluation of the educational quality becomes then a domain in which the impact of a centrally taken decision can manifest itself in line with or even before the actual teaching practices change.

All programs of the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven are obliged to evaluate their educational quality once every 4 years. Once every 8 years the programs are assessed by an external evaluation commission. This evaluation is coached by a central support office of the university and follows detailed and yet relatively open guidelines composed by the same central office. The most essential characteristic of the evaluation is its orientation towards quality improvement. Not only are the strengths and weaknesses of the program analysed. Attention is also paid to the amelioration of the quality. The departments themselves are responsible for the evaluation. Faculty, teaching assistants

and students take part in it. The evaluation is based on an explicit educational mission statement on which the whole teaching team in principle agrees. The program as a whole is evaluated, from the very first to the last year, paying attention both to individual courses and to the program as a whole (issues like the design of the program, study load, educational infrastructure ...). The evaluation process takes two years. During the first year the data are collected (usually through written questionnaires presented to all students) and interpreted according to the criteria that were established by the evaluation commission. The second year is devoted to the mending of the shortcomings. Individual members of faculty are invited to discuss the results of the evaluation with the chair of the evaluation commission and to work out a solution for their problem(s). Shortcomings at the level of the program and suggestions to ameliorate the educational quality are pointed out to the permanent educational commission that has to design and work out an action plan.

Our main research question, then, was whether and to what extent the focus and/or the procedure of the evaluation projects changed after the adoption of guided self-study. Did the programs indeed take the concept of guided self-study as the starting point for their evaluation? Did they look at other things than they would have done if guided self-study was not launched as a new concept for university teaching? Did they evaluate the quality of their education in another way taking into account guided self-study?

In the literature one can find several elements that seem to influence the eagerness with which innovations are implemented in educational organisations. Usually these elements are put into categories, such as the characteristics of the 'product' that has to be implemented, the characteristics of the organisation which has to implement the innovation and the characteristics of the external support the organisation receives in order to implement the innovation. van den Akker (1993) argues that the first category, the characteristics of the product, has a direct impact on the way individual teachers implement an innovation in their daily teaching practice. He considers the other categories more conditional, they are supposed only to have a more indirect influence on the implementation.

With regard to the characteristics of the product, Waeytens et al. (1999) argue that the *'perceived manageability'* of the product is a crucial feature for its implementation. This variable refers to the extent to which the department is convinced that the introduced innovation is manageable in order to go into action.

With regard to the characteristics of the organisation Vanthuyne et al. (1998) state that the problem definition and innovative capacity of an organisation are important indicators to understand its handling of the quality assurance system. The indicator *'problem definition'* refers to the extent to which the care for educational quality is internalised as a task and responsibility of the program itself.

The question here is to what extent quality assurance is an essential part of the organisational culture. Two variables make it possible to describe a department's problem definition: (1) the development of the mission, i.e. the extent to which the vision on high quality education is discussed and the effort done to reach consensus on this mission, and (2) the attitude towards evaluation (Segers, 1993): the extent to which a critical attitude towards the educational practice is considered normal and even desirable. The indicator *'innovative capacity'* refers to the orientation of the department to the improvement of education. In order to describe this characteristic, we will analyse (1) the innovation activities that are run in the department and the extent to which these are embedded in the program as a whole, and (2) the department's policy with regard to the professional educational training of its faculty.

With regard to the characteristics of the external support Vandenberghe and Van der Vegt (1992) describe several functions of support that have an impact on the realisation of an innovation. First, it seems important that the (external) support clearly indicates the direction the innovation is supposed to go to. What are the objectives of the innovation and what consequences will it have for the particular organisation? Second, the (external) support should exert some directive pressure in order to launch the implementation of the innovation and in order to keep it running. The development of a supportive network (technically, but also socially and emotionally) is very important in this respect. Finally, it is also important that the external support clearly indicates how much freedom the organisation has in interpreting the innovation.

Our main hypothesis is that departments that score high on problem definition (development of mission and evaluation attitude) and on innovative capacity (innovation activities and professional training policy), will show a greater impact of the central decision to implement guided self-study on their evaluation practice. We also suppose that a high perceived manageability and a positive appreciation of the external support contribute in a positive way to the impact of the central adoption of guided self-study on the 'local' quality evaluation.

3. Methodology

The aim of this study was to explore the impact of a central decision on the departmental evaluation practice. In this respect we wanted to reach understanding of what is important for the people involved according to their own mode (Smeyers, 1994). In order to gain this understanding the choice was made to collect qualitative data by means of semi-structured interviews. These interviews were seen as an opportunity to invite the respondents to clarify their opinions with regard to the themes of research. Such a flexible (because the interviews were relatively open) and at the same time controlled (we worked with previously determined questions linked to the variables selected in our theoretical

framework) design allowed us to obtain lively, accurate and inclusive comments of the respondents that were based on their personal experiences and construction of meaning.

Three humanity departments were selected to take part in this study. This selection was mainly based on technical grounds. All three of the departments started their evaluation in the academic year (99-00) following the one in which the academic authorities adopted guided self-study. Within each department we interviewed the chair of the permanent educational commission, the chair of the evaluation commission and a member of the evaluation commission. In each of the three groups of respondents, one respondent also collaborated in the previous evaluation (as member or chair). This enabled us to compare the current evaluation project with the previous one (when guided self-study was still 'unknown'). We chose to interview all respondents of the same department at once because this made it possible for the respondents to react to one another and to validate in a way each other's opinions.

In order to analyse the research data a two step strategy was used. First, a 'vertical' analysis of the data was made. In order to gain insight in the respondents' perceptions of the innovation and of the characteristics of the department and of the external support, the transcripts of the interviews were carefully analysed. First all the data were coded, then they were displayed in matrices (see Miles & Huberman, 1994), so that they could be compared systematically. The second step of the analysis, the 'horizontal' analysis, dealt with the comparison among settings. A case-oriented approach was adopted here. The typical patterns found in each setting were compared with one another to "discover whether a pattern found in one site plays out in others as well, suggesting a common scenario." (Huberman & Miles, 1989: 64)

4. Results

4.1 Content and procedure of the evaluation

With regard to the content and procedure of the evaluation the three departments clearly differ from one another. Department A strictly followed the guidelines and carried out a 'classical' evaluation both with regard to the content and the procedure. The students were questioned about the quality of each course and of the program as a whole. Students as well as members of faculty were also invited to hearings in order to discuss some of the results of the written questionnaires. The respondents acknowledge that guided self-study did not play any significant role in the evaluation: *"The document (about guided self-study) was new for us. During the hearings, we assessed in general terms what the problems are and how we can solve them. We didn't ask specific questions about guided self-study. We only assessed a little bit ... 'What do you think about it?'. But nothing really happened in the*

evaluation ... It was very new ... There was only a document, a plan ... Nobody really had heard about the document ..."[1]

Department B opted for what they call a *"constructive"* evaluation. They explicitly *"wanted to explore to what extent guided self-study is already existing and also what the possibilities are for further implementation."* The focus of the evaluation was not directed to the individual courses, but to the program as a whole. Students and faculty were questioned about the goals and teaching strategies used for each course. This was however not done to evaluate individual faculty members, but rather to describe the state of the art for the program as a whole with regard to the implementation of guided self-study. The ultimate goal of the evaluation commission was to delineate some scenarios through which the faculty members can adapt the program and their teaching strategies so that they work more in line with the new concept. Guided self-study apparently did play a role in the evaluation, yet the respondents admit that they never really discussed the concept in the commission.

Department C, finally, evaluated the program starting from a *"positive generative approach"*. They made *"the fundamental choice not first to evaluate what exists and then to react, but to start from what is already happening and to improve some things during the evaluation itself."* They asked faculty members to point out to the commission existing initiatives with regard to student centred teaching, so that these could be discussed and presented at the permanent educational commission in the hope that these examples will inspire other faculty members. All the (closed and open) questions about the quality of the program and of individual courses were discussed with the faculty before the questionnaires were distributed. According to the respondents this leads already to a certain reflection. The framework for the evaluation was the program's educational mission that puts forward four important pillars: independent study activity of the students, practical orientation, research orientation and integration. The respondents evaluate guided self-study as a concept that is in line with this mission.

4.2 Characteristics of the innovation

The respondents of department A are convinced that guided self-study is in agreement with the ongoing developments within some of the courses of the program towards a greater student-centredness. Guided self-study clearly led to a greater awareness of the importance of high quality education. However, it did not until now result in major changes. Only two faculty members explicitly redesigned their course according to the principles of guided self-study. The majority of the staff - according to the respondents - is concerned about the growing work load for the students that will

[1] Quotations in italics are statements of the respondents. In the translation we tried to affect the original meaning as little as possible.

inevitably be the consequence of guided self-study as every one will give students extra assignments so that they can assimilate the course in an active way. In general, this department seems to be persuaded that guided self-study is easier to realise in a master's than in a bachelor's degree program. Students getting a bachelor's degree are not capable to make extra assignments as they still have to assimilate the basics of their field. Guided self-study is considered unfeasible in large groups. In such a setting it is quite impossible to correct papers and assignments. One can conclude that department A has a poor perception of the manageability of the concept. Guided self-study is not 'ready for implementation'. Many faculty would like to receive workable ideas.

Department B expresses the opinion that guided self-study is a valuable, inspiring concept. Yet they also experience it as a considerably indefinite view on education. According to the commission this vagueness has some advantages. It leaves plenty of room for interpretation. This vagueness on the other hand, is something that can be used by those who want to delay the implementation as they can argue that the goals nor the teaching strategies guided self-study pleads for are very transparent. One can conclude that the perceived manageability of the concept is seriously doubted in this department.

Department C openly admits that the existence of the documents about guided self-study meant more for the implementation than their actual content. The commission didn't discuss these documents in depth. There is a general consensus that guided self-study pushed the program to make its mission explicit and more specifically to pay attention to students' independent study activities. The main problem with guided self-study however are the large groups of students faculty have to work with and the shortage of staff. The program therefore chose a small-scale approach: *"We thought: It is not possible to realise guided self-study as it is presented in the documents. We don't have the means and there exists a sceptical atmosphere. So let's do what we can. Here and there some small changes. If these are successful, they will inspire the others."* Guided self-study's manageability is not rated very high, yet that doesn't inhibit the department to work out the evaluation of their education inspired by the concept.

4.3 Characteristics of the department

With regard to the indicator 'problem definition' department A scores rather mediocre. There exists no agreement on the mission of the program. *"Everybody is responsible for his own course and sometimes we come together just to find out whether we don't throw a spanner in each others' wheels."* Although the general acceptance of guided self-study is growing (*"many faculty become aware of the fact that it is serious, it will not fade away if one waits long enough"*), it seems not to function as a leverage for the discussion about the mission of the department. The implementation of semesterial exams and of the new European structure for higher education might be more powerful for

that matter according to the respondents. Yet there exists also some fear that these innovations will demand a lot of practical work: *"Only once the practical organisation is over and done with, we'll be able to tackle guided self-study more fundamentally."* However, for the moment it seems to be difficult to launch the discussion about guided self-study. The same can be said about discussions concerning the quality of education and the evaluation of it in general. A respondent states: *"We really don't have the habit to ask each other advice in case of trouble. Here and there some colleagues who know each other well. That's a pity because a lot of problems could be resolved that way."* One can easily understand that the department's attitude towards evaluation is not very open. With regard to the indicator 'innovative capacity' the department scores better. Six years ago the department started financing by a faculty fund innovative teaching projects (beside research projects so that the department would be able to play a role on the international scene). These resources made it possible to launch more or less 4 projects a year that led to cases, sets of exercises, software ... for several courses. The results of these projects are still used intensively. The financing, however, stopped (as the central academic authorities started to finance teaching projects). At the moment the innovative capacity of the department seems to be limited to the fact that the permanent educational commission made an inventory of the study load for the bachelor degree's students. Also there does not seem to exist a departmental policy with regard to the professional educational training of faculty. Much of the professional training sessions organised by a central support office of the university are appreciated as too exclusively directed towards the use of ICT in courses, and not adapted to the real needs of the faculty of the department.

For department B a different image emerges with regard to the department characteristics, at least for the department's innovative capacity. The respondents admit that the permanent educational commission has no idea about the initiatives of particular faculty to improve or innovate their teaching. Also, a departmental policy with regard to professional training of faculty does not exist. If faculty members take some of the courses offered by a central support office, they do so on their own initiative and most of the time without their colleagues knowing it. The permanent educational commission does not function as an inspiring group that can launch teaching innovations and can keep them running. Main obstacle here is the fact that the commission as well as the differences in opinion are too big to handle, besides the fact that some people *"are not really convinced that change is necessary"* while others *"want to change things but don't see the possibilities"* and only a very few *"do have ideas and propose changes that are not discussed"*. A respondent puts it like this: *"This is a ship with a lot of captains, that is to say a lot of people who believe they are the captains. Such ships don't sail very well."* In line with this conclusion it does not really come as a surprise that it is very difficult to discuss about (the quality of) education in a fundamental way in the permanent educational commission. Outside the commission education is also rarely a topic for discussion, *"only if one can complain"* or if colleagues can get along with each other. There is no openness with regard to

education or the evaluation of it, let alone with regard to the department's educational mission. The respondents hope that the coming external visitation will open the discussion, yet at the same time they fear that *"the advice of the external visitation will only lead to delay, and delay and delay."*

Department C's problem definition and innovative capacity seem to be stronger developed when compared to the other departments. Education is a topic for discussion in this department. The permanent educational commission plays a key role in this respect. Each year the priorities for education are set and the syllabi and improvement initiatives are discussed. *"In these discussions we look at the content of the innovations, but we also talk about the form 'How do you handle it in your classes' That's interesting for the colleagues, informative."* In spite of this explicit mission development, the respondents are reluctant to affirm that every faculty member works at educational innovations sharing the same mission: *"We didn't really start that way. There are aspects of a mission. One chooses some things and tries to realise these ... like for instance the attention we paid to neurophysiology or to the integration of practical sessions ... These are choices one makes, steps one takes ... You could say they represent parts of the mission, that have of course implications ... But we never really started from a well defined blueprint."* Essentially, the department works at concrete initiatives to improve the educational quality in line with the pillars of its mission. In the recent past for instance the bachelor's program was adjusted by integrating the practical sessions on qualitative and quantitative methodologies. Several initiatives are taken at the level of the master's program to involve students in a more active way, like for instance by organising 'theme days' on which a particular topic is treated from 4 different disciplines. As these initiatives are always discussed in the permanent educational commission they inspire individual faculty members to take initiatives in their own courses. This is at least what the respondents explicitly hope. The permanent educational commission pursues a positive policy that aims to get faculty enthusiastic about educational innovation through manageable and inspiring examples. As a consequence, one might say *"there exists a tolerance for diversity. On condition that one teaches his course adequately, without serious complaints of the students or far too deviating examination conditions, we really are lenient. I really don't think we oblige everybody to change and to work in a completely different way."* So a critical attitude towards education seems to be the norm in this department, yet there are no indications that this is linked to an outlined policy with regard to the professional educational training of the faculty.

4.4 Characteristics of the external support

With regard to the characteristics of the external support the judgements of all three departments show remarkable similarities. In general one can say that the departments hold the opinion that the functions of support as described in the theoretical framework are not realised. All departments are convinced that the direction of the innovation remains unclear due to the *"abstract"*, *"much too theoretic"* and

"too sizeable" character of the documents. Guided self-study is seen as very vague concept. Department B believes this is a conscious strategy of the academic authorities. If they would point out in very concrete terms what guided self-study stands for and how it has to be realised, they would be obliged also to really take care of the necessary means for the departments (financial resources and staff) to go into action. The directive pressure of the external support is failing because too many innovations are launched at more or less the same time. Fundamental discussions about guided self-study risk to disappear to the background because of the practical demands of innovations such as the semester exams and the European structure for higher education. There is no network that supports the implementation of guided self-study. The external support remains invisible for the departments. They are convinced they would be better of with a change facilitator at their side within their own department. With regard to the freedom the departments have to interpret the innovation, one could say that the lack of clarity enables the departments to make their own interpretation. On the other hand the experienced vagueness sets no limits to this freedom. Even if departments interpret the innovation 'wrong' they are not corrected.

5. Discussion

The data illustrate that guided self-study did have some impact on the evaluation initiatives of department B and C. What is remarkable, though, is that neither department discussed in depth the concept's grounds nor consequences. Department B used the concept in an effort to provoke a (more general?) discussion about educational quality. Department C incorporated guided self-study within its own mission. They supposed the concept to be in agreement with the department's mission and consequently considered it as an extra stimulus for the ongoing educational improvement initiatives. As far as department A is considered, there exists hardly any trace of guided self-study in the evaluation project.

Referring to Vandenberghe et al. (1993) one can conclude that department C behaves rather creatively with regard to guided self-study. The new concept is integrated in the existing goals. The concept in a way confirms the existing professional culture, which is aimed at ongoing improvement. Department B reacts in a more defensive way. Differences among team members as far as educational perspectives are concerned, and the concomitant psychological tension, obstruct any sort of development. The primary aim of most faculty is to preserve their personal opinions about education and teaching, only a few of them try to break through this 'stuck' situation by 'provoking' a discussion. Department A's reaction towards guided self-study can be characterised as rather passively. The faculty demonstrate a certain willingness to participate and to carry out activities in line with guided self-study. However, this attitude does not lead to a shared vision or to organisational arrangements that stimulate or co-ordinate the implementation process. The effects of the new concept remain isolated results.

Out of the data two major factors can be pointed at in order to understand this relatively poor success of the new concept at the level of the quality assurance initiatives. First of all, all three departments rated the perceived manageability of guided self-study rather low. Department A and C point at some problems they envisage for the implementation of the concept. Large groups of students with a lack of appropriate prior knowledge and a shortage of staff make it difficult to implement guided self-study. Besides that all departments state that the concept remains rather vague. Consequently they make their own interpretation of it. Department A considers it an inevitable innovation for which more manageable ideas are necessary. Department B fears that the vagueness will offer those who want to a reason to delay its implementation. Department C incorporated the concept in its own mission. The external support seems not capable to prevent different interpretations of the concept to originate. On the contrary, the external support strengthens the poor perceived manageability, due to its lack of direction, directive pressure, supportive network and limitations. In general none of the departments seems to be aware of the coherence behind the academic authorities' policy initiatives to stimulate the implementation of guided self-study. They perceive it as isolated initiatives that bear no relationship with guided self-study. The lack of systematic attention for professional development initiatives offered by a central support office is quite significant in this respect.

As all three departments are not convinced about the manageability of the concept nor about the external support for guided self-study, an explanation for the diagnosed differences in the concept's impact on quality assurance initiatives has to be found elsewhere. The data gathered about the characteristics of the departments can help to understand the origin of these differences. Department A's passive reaction towards guided self-study is not really surprising if one takes into account the fact that there exists no agreement on the department's educational mission, nor openness towards evaluation. Although the innovative capacity of the department was rather great in the recent past, nowadays it seems to be simmering. Yet, the department does not reject guided self-study. At the moment this department seems to be waiting for initiatives of the academic authorities to go for the implementation of guided self-study. They are waiting for some practical ideas.

Department B's defensive reaction towards guided self-study seems to be rather general and can be understood out of the difficulties of the department to develop a shared mission, its opposed attitude towards evaluation and its limited innovative capacity. Some faculty members, though, want to break through this defensive attitude. They 'use' guided self-study to open up the communication about education. At the same time, they seem to be convinced that more will be needed to keep the discussion going. They hope the external visitation will do a good job in that respect.

Department C's creative reaction is in line with its rather well developed problem definition and innovative capacity. Education is something this department works at and discusses about. Care for educational quality is considered an obvious and important task. When confronted with a new concept,

the department tries to give this a place within its own mission, so that the department can keep the actual policy running.

6. Conclusion

Implementing a new educational concept is no sinecure. Even if one only studies the impact of a centrally adopted innovation at the departments' quality assurance initiatives, it becomes clear that an adequate innovation strategy is needed if one wants to make the implementation work. If departments perceive the manageability of the concept and the external support offered as weak, the implementation of it largely depends upon the departments' characteristics. Departments that score better on problem definition and innovative capacity seem to be better armed to work with innovations. Consequently, if the academic authorities want innovations to be implemented, more attention needs to be paid at the characteristics of the innovation and of the external support. At the same time the most should also be made of the assets of departments. By analogy with the individual student's learning process, one could say that it is essential to take the departments' prior knowledge, motivation and meta-cognitive characteristics into account as well as to provide a supportive 'learning environment' in order to implement educational innovations.

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